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->From the Editor's Keyboard   "Saying it like it is!"
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It's been another long, tiring week. On the plus side, the weather is
starting to improve, with above-normal temperatures today. Sure, it
won't last, but enjoy it while you can. Real Spring weather is finally
getting here! I'm hoping to spend some time outside this weekend (before
the rains arrive!) and get some work done in the yard. And, hopefully I
will have the energy to get it done!

I came across a couple of articles, included with this week's issue, that
pertain to how some PC use is dangerous to our environment. I wanted to
make my own comments about some of these observations, but I'll wait until
next week to do so; I just don't have the time and energy to go about it
the way that I'd like! So, I hope that you'll bear with me, and wait a
week!

Until next time...


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                         PEOPLE ARE TALKING
                        compiled by Joe Mirando
                          joe@atarinews.org
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Hidi ho friends and neighbors. I apologize for my absence last week, but
things got crazy with the holiday, and there weren't a lot of items in
the NewsGroup.

I do want to talk about a couple of things this week though. If I had
been able to get a column out last week, I would have mentioned this
'grass roots movement' about taxes... the "teabag movement".

You'd think that one of these guys or gals in the Senate would have had
an aide or intern google "teabagging" before they went public with it. A
quick search for 'teabagging' at http://www.wikipedia.org would have
told them that this was probably a bad term to use.

As far as 'grass roots' is concerned, I can't see that. This is a
movement conceived and presented by politicos. 'Regular' people have
joined in, sure. But not in the numbers and not for the causes the

loudest voices would have us believe. Some are protesting higher taxes, even though their taxes are going down. Some are protesting the stimulus package, even while they bemoan the lack of federal funds. There are those protesting restrictions on the financial industry, even though the lack of restrictions is what caused this mess. There are those protesting Obama's "muslim-ness", likening him to Hitler (in what possible way, I cannot fathom), questioning his citizenship even though it's been proven beyond any doubt, and decrying the fact that he's upheld some of the policies of the previous administration while simultaneously lauding the actions of that self-same previous administration. Cause and effect don't seem to mean anything here. There's even a Governor talking about secession from the union, even after requesting federal aid. All of this under the umbrella of 'teabagging'. Yeah, they're teabagging, alright.

I also think it bears mentioning that the these people are intent on being the teabaggERs, not teabagEEs... Think 'David Vitter' as opposed to 'Larry Craig'.

The economy IS showing some slight signs of improvement, and for some unfathomable reason that is held up by conservatives as vindication of the policies of the previous administration, while the root cause of the problem is blithely put upon the shoulders of the current administration. There's that cause-and-effect thing again.

Personally, I don't follow the ups and downs of the stock market. It seems that every announcement from some gasbag radio talk show host and fourth rate television mouthpiece sends the market on a wild roller coaster ride as the buyers and sellers weigh indicators and volumes and rants and innuendo and hopeful and disparaging signs.

I like former Fed chairman Alan Greenspan's method of tracking the economy: Following the sales of mens' underwear. They're not subject to the whims of a pronouncements from disgruntled Senators and Governors, all men need them but buy them as a necessity and not as a fashion statement or indulgence, the volume of sales is determined by only two things: actual need (which remains fairly constant) and available income. When money is tight, gotchies are one of the last considerations. In short, let me say that it might be time to buy a little bit of stock in Fruit of the Loom and Haines.

Okay, BVDs aside, let's talk about another biggie... PIRATES! My first impulse is to blame Johnny Depp for making it look so cool. [grin] These guys have got to be stopped. The havoc they can create is incredibly far-reaching, and they need to be... discouraged. I'm not usually a violent or aggressive person, but if asked, I would recommend that any approaching unidentified or overtly aggressive water craft be greeted with a single warning shot... right... through... its... hull. The navy of the country of registry of every merchant ship should supply two or three trained sailors for each ship, equipped with an array of weapons deemed necessary for the protection of that vessel. Most of the 'pirate vessels' are small boats... some very small. A few encounters with the proper munitions would go a long way toward dissuading pirates from doing their thing.

It's my understanding that international treaty or agreement prohibits the carrying of weapons of the type needed aboard merchant vessels and, by and large, that's a good thing. Merchant sailors shouldn't be asked to be weapons experts, nor should they be asked to militarize their careers... even though some would do so willingly and eagerly. But

whatever treaty or agreement there is should be amended to allow, if not require, the aforementioned navies to provide support and protection for these vessels. And while outsourcing might be required by smaller countries, privatization should be banned. No more KBRs, Haliburtons or Blackwaters, please.

While it's true, as I said before, that most of these 'pirate craft' are small fishing boats and, in some cases, 'Zodiac'-style boats, there are 'mother ships' here and there from which the small boats proceed when too far away from shore. I wonder how well maintained most of these ships are. I mean, big ships are a lot of work and I don't know if a 'gang' of pirates can properly maintain them. I wouldn't be at all surprised to hear of a lot of them simply disappearing, leaving nothing more than an oil slick as if they'd been hit by a torpedo or something. [dark grin]

No, I'm not in a very charitable mood these days... at least not toward these guys.

Well, enough of that. Let's get to the few messages that have built up in the past several weeks, okay?

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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In reference to the popular circuit simulator program, SPICE, and an instructional book on it, someone posts:

"SPICE for Power Electronics and Electric Power
This book about power electronics using spice program

the link:

http://tinyurl.com/cu2n82" [URL modified by Editor]
[Be aware: This link is to a '.rar' file. We make no claim as to its content or safety. Open with care if you open at all]

Lonny Pursell, being the humorous guy (and science fiction aficionado) that he is, replies:

"Baron Harkonnen: He who controls the Spice, controls the universe!"

Well, I thought it was cute. [grin]
'Tyndareus' asks for info and opinions on hard drives:

"Which Hard drive solution works reliably with an ST system best an Atari Megafile or an ICD FAST or ???"

Ben Smith tells Tyndareus:

"You can download ICD's Hard Drive Utilities from www.icd.com
This is the version before the Pro version!"

Edward Baiz adds his experiences:

"I was having MEGA problems on [my] ST using ICD. I switched to HDDriver. After that, no problems at all."

Miro Kropacek adds the URL for Ultrasatan, a solid-state hard drive replacement for hard drives on any computer with an ACSI (Atari SCSI port):

http://ultrasatan.atari.org "

Guillaume Tello adds this:

"For me the best solution is the one I can find. There are not too many HD for the ST... So, when you find one, get it! On my first STE I have a 160Mb SCSI Apple drive (taken from a MAC) with an ACSI/SCSI interface (not Icd, not The link). On the second one I have a Syquest 44Mb with the same kind of interface.

Those SCSI drives are faster than the original Megafile."

Ronald Hall adds his (and my) opinion for the software portion:

"Hard to top HDDriver. Commercial, but its still being developed/Supported and Uwe is awesome."

Tyndareus now asks for help with is Mega2:

"I have a Mega ST2 which I used many years ago and decided it was time to resurrect it. When I powered it on nothing happened.

Could someone kindly [point me toward] any service manual resources to help determine the cause?"

Mike Freeman tells Ty:

"My first thought would be the power supply unit. I had one go out in my Falcon. If that's the problem, you could either buy a new one (very expensive – try Best Elec.) or if you're more mechanically inclined you could hack in a PC power supply (cheaper, but harder fix). Just be aware that the wire colors aren't exactly the same between the two. If I remember correctly (and I may not) the yellow and blue wires are the same voltage, but reverse polarity between the two. I didn't find this out until it was too late and had to replace a violently exploded transistor from my Falcon's sound system. Very exciting! Fortunately, that was the worst damage that was done."

Jim DeClercq adds:

"Try a 40 ohm resistor between 12 volts and ground for a few seconds. Sometimes revives a stalled power supply. disconnect from Mega first, and might work. These 20 year old switching power supplies sometimes get flakey."

Guillaume Tello posts this about M_Player under Aranym:

"Finally, I managed to make M_Player run under Aranym. The "dirt"
programming is back!

I plan to improve two important points:
- the disassembling of an animation (to TGA and sound)
- the creation of an animation (the BATCH file is a bit hard for most
users, I try to make a clearer interface)

- the direct conversion only works under TOS with a very ... personal
system (M_PLAYER calls a second M_PLAYER!)

Well, for those of you who made long time ago some sequences with
CyberPaint (*.SEQ, *.DLT) with Lexicor (*.FLM) or digitized videos with
Video Master (*.FLM) this is the chance to view them again if you don't
own your original Atari anymore.
And with the disassembling and creating functions, you should be able to
convert them to a more modern format such as AVI or MOV.

So, you can test M_Player under Aranym, just download it from this page:

http://pagesperso-orange.fr/gtello/mplayere.htm

M_Player can now deal with long file names and lower case names too.
So it is more compatible with newer systems (Ext2 partitions... etc)

That's version 3.21"

Well folks, that's it for this time around. Tune in again next week,
same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying
when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section   - Ultra-Sensitive Wii Motion Controller!
   """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""   Wii MotionPlus for New Games Only!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News   - The Latest Gaming News!
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          Ultra-Sensitive Wii Motion Controller Due in June

Building on its pioneering motion-sensing video-game console, Nintendo announced Tuesday the pending release of the Wii MotionPlus accessory, which it said will deliver "new levels of precision and performance."

The accessory, previewed at the E3 trade show last summer and which attaches to the Wii wireless controller, is planned for release in early June. The company said, when used for specially designed games, it offers "finer detail" and "greater accuracy than ever before."

At a MSRP of $19.99, the MotionPlus is designed to replicate exactly on a TV screen each turn of the player's wrist or twist of the body. One game designed to take advantage of such subtleties of motion is Nintendo's Wii Sports Resort, the sequel to the Wii Sports game that comes with the console. Activities in the Wii Sports Resort include cruising on a water scooter, dueling with swords, and throwing a Frisbee. A MotionPlus accessory is included with each Wii Sports Resort.

Wii Sports Resort will be launched in July, but two other games from Electronic Arts - Grand Slam Tennis and Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10 - will be released sooner, shortly after the accessory, and they are also designed specifically for the MotionPlus.

Cammie Dunaway, executive vice president of sales and marketing, said Nintendo expects the new accessory to offer "a new evolution in video-game control," and developers are already working on additional games to take advantage of its motion sensitivity.

But it will take a while for developers to adapt to the new capability. Game pioneer Masaya Matsuura recently told MTV that he had MotionPlus development kits during the making of his Major Minor's Majestic March marching-band game for the Wii, but "it didn't really make it any more fun than it already was." He speculated that MotionPlus titles need to be planned with the accessory in mind from the beginning.

Nintendo is hoping such innovations as the MotionPlus will help it keep its position as the video-game console business moves quickly. Some industry observers, for instance, have noted that the Wii's console sales last month in Japan were lower than Sony's PlayStation 3, about 146,000 PS3s to about 99,000 Wiis. In total, though, the Wii has sold nearly three times as many units in that country as the PS3.

Nintendo said it wasn't particularly concerned about the PS3's sales, especially since the first few months of a year are generally slower.

The company also recently released the DSi, an update of its handheld DS console, which includes two screens and two cameras. Like the motion-sensing Wii, the cameras are intended to create a unique interactive signature, such as adding effects to photos or importing your image into a game.

                    Wii MotionPlus for New Games Only

Nintendo's Wii MotionPlus, a precision-remedy for its finicky Wii Remote, won't be backwards compatible, says the company. That's bad news for anyone who'd been planning to revisit oldies like Metroid Prime 3 or Super

Mario Galaxy, or, you know, finally get some decent deterministic action out of Wii Sports' sloppy, pointless baseball and boxing sims.

What /will/ it work with? New games only, all custom-tailored, a fact that reportedly torqued off certain blindsided third-party developers last summer.

Why no retroactive precision-motion love? The cynical view fingers upcoming sequels like Wii Sports Resort with its medley of frisbee, jet ski, and kendo sims. Nintendo wants you to buy new stuff, not discover the pleasures of revisiting the oldies wielding a superior control mechanism they probably could and should have shipped in the first place.

That's too bad. I was kind of counting on a backwards-compatibility option. I can't stand the wobbly, wiggly, frequently downright *sloppy* point-and-click action of the remote as-is. I played through the better part of Twilight Princess with the pointer feature disabled because the ball of light with fly's wings kept getting stuck in the sensor periphery. Don't get me started on point-and-squirm shooters like Call of Duty 3 (I mean *before* the stuff about the gameplay itself being ho-hum).

Hey Nintendo, would it really sunder reality and usher in an epoch of apocalyptic doom if you worked with your third-party pals a little more closely, maybe even reconsidered downloadable MotionPlus updates for a few of your top-rated titles?

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Spam E-mails Killing the Environment

If annoying users and wasting their time wasn't bad enough, spam e-mails are also responsible for clogging our atmosphere with carbon dioxide, a gas that shoulders much of the blame for global warming, according to a report commissioned by antivirus vendor McAfee.

"When you look at it from an individual user perspective you're only talking about 0.3 grams of carbon dioxide per spam message," said Dave Marcus, director of security research and communications at McAfee's Avert Labs, in a telephone interview. "When you extrapolate the math out to the larger numbers, it definitely is significant."

The McAfee report, which was written by consulting company ICF International, said the estimated 62 trillion spam e-mail that get sent each year consume 33 billion kilowatt hours of electricity, enough to power 2.4 million homes. In addition, spam e-mail releases as much carbon dioxide into the atmosphere as 3.1 million cars consuming 2 billion

gallons of gasoline.

That sounds bad, but what does it mean? McAfee's report didn't provide an estimate for the daily energy usage of a PC or server, or the energy consumed by other applications. Without these numbers, it's difficult to put the spam energy numbers into context and understand their significance.

The report also failed to detail the methodology and assumptions that ICF used to arrive at these numbers. For example, the report doesn't say what researchers expect computers to be doing if not being used to filter and read spam e-mails or how this energy could be used for alternative applications. Depending on assumptions like this, it's possible that computers could be used for tasks that consume more power than applications that fight spam, releasing even greater amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

McAfee deferred questions about the methodology and the assumptions that were made to ICF. However, because the ICF researchers who wrote the report are based in the U.K., the time difference meant they could not be reached to comment on this story at the time of writing.

Even so, the crux of McAfee's argument remains unchanged: spam is bad and - all things held equal - it's more efficient to fight spam at the source or e-mail gateway than at the PC.

"It's just so much less efficient if a user has to clean their own mailbox," Marcus said.

Spam has long been a target of antivirus vendors but McAfee wanted to reframe discussions of the problem in environmental terms, rather than the annoyance that spam causes users or its links to malware and cybercrime.

"This really gives people a different way of looking at it. Aside from the nuisance factor, it actually has a quantifiable impact on the environment," he said.

 If Spam Equals Tons of CO2 What's the Carbon Footprint of Cyber Porn?

A McAfee study estimates 62 trillion spam e-mails equal 33 billion kilowatt hours of electricity or about as much carbon as 3.1 million cars consuming 2 billion gallons of gasoline. In January, a study by Harvard University claimed two Google searches produced the same amount of CO2 as bringing water to a boil on your stovetop.

From these headlines it appears computer users should be shamed into joining drivers of gas-guzzling Hummer SUVs when it comes to feeling green guilt. It makes me wonder how the Internet's creator, former Vice President Al Gore, feels about these digital carbon statistics. Could a sequel to an *Inconvenient Truth* be in the works?

Here's a list of digital activities I think digital-carbon-footprint scientists should look into next.

*Facebook: *ComScore says 200 million people logged on to Facebook in December 2008 to check out photos, enter status updates, play Mafia

Wars and answer endless mundane quizzes. Facebook may connect friends, but how much carbon is that zombie army of yours really spewing into the atmosphere?

*Twitter: *Ashton Kutcher is trying to beat CNN to one million followers today, and millions around the world are tweeting to whoever is listening. But at what cost? I'm sure that double yoke you found in your egg this morning was quite gratifying, but did Tweeting this tidbit of information just push us closer to ecological disaster?

*AOL Discs: *AOL subscription discs aren't around anymore, but what was the impact of millions of discs dropping into North American mailboxes every day? Some people have turned old AOL discs into art, but how many discs are sitting in landfills right now? Maybe you can start a massive salvaging campaign and turn those junked discs into solar panels. Get over to the local dump and start digging kids.

*Porn: *First there is oodles of tasteless bandwidth hogging stuff. Then there is the never ending pop-ups, malware, and Web page re-directs (or so I'm told).

*Online Pranks: *Hackers are rumored to be manipulating Time.com's poll to determine the world's most influential people. Take a close look at the top 10 and you'll see it spells out "marble cake." One hacker has already voted 10,000,000 times and another plans on running an entire server dedicated to manipulating the Time poll. Can we blame these hucksters for the meltdown of polar ice caps?

*IM: *How many chat windows do you have open during the day? Two? Five? How much is that costing the environment? What are you really talking about all day anyway? Question: How much carbon does it suck up to produce every LOL on the Internet a day? Now here is a ban I can get behind.

*Blogs: *Social media may be advancing the way we communicate via blogs. But is the environmental cost of millions of blogs on topics as exciting as floor wax worth the price?

Did I miss anything in my list? Don't you feel guilty now for spewing up all that digital carbon? Just remember, you might be able to Pwn an iPhone, but there's no hacking Mother Earth once she is gone.

Microsoft Says EU Antitrust Deadline Extended

Microsoft Corp confirmed on Wednesday a report that it had received a one-week extension from EU antitrust regulators to respond to charges that it had sought to thwart rivals by bundling its web browser with Windows systems.

"Microsoft confirms that the new deadline for the company to respond to the Commission's statement of objections is April 28," a spokeswoman said, referring to an unsourced reference to a new deadline reported on the website of the Financial Times.

A spokeswoman for the European Commission said she could not immediately comment.

Last month, the European Union executive pushed back the original deadline to April 21 after the giant U.S. software company asked for more time. It charged the company on January 15 with infringing EU rules by abusing its dominant position.

The bundling of its Internet Explorer to Windows shielded Microsoft from head-to-head competition with other browsers, and that also harmed product innovation and reduced customer choice, the Commission had said.

Microsoft has said the Commission may order the company and equipment makers to obligate users to choose a particular browser when buying a computer, or that multiple browsers be made available on new Windows-based computers. This could come on top of a possible hefty fine. Separately, trade group ECIS - which numbers International Business Machines Corp, Nokia, Oracle Corp and Sun Microsystems Inc among its members - joined in the case against Microsoft on Wednesday.

ECIS said it had been accepted as an interested third party in the Commission's case.

"Smaller, more innovative, browser developers need a level playing field," ECIS spokesman Thomas Vinje said in a statement.

Google Inc, which offers the Chrome browser; the Mozilla foundation, producer of the Firefox Web browser, and privately held Norwegian company Opera have already added their voices to the case against Microsoft.

US DOJ Requests More Time for Microsoft Oversight

The Justice Department asked a federal judge Thursday to extend its watch over some of Microsoft Corp.'s business practices for a second time, saying it needs an extra year and a half to make sure Microsoft's antitrust compliance passes muster.

Microsoft, the federal government and 17 states agreed in 2002 to settle an antitrust battle over the software maker's use of its Windows monopoly to squash competitors.

The terms of the settlement were initially to expire in November 2007, but U.S. District Court Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly granted a two-year extension covering parts of the agreement. Now the Justice Department wants to extend that to May 2011.

Microsoft agreed to the extension request. Kollar-Kotelly is expected to address it in a status conference in Washington on Wednesday.

The antitrust settlement requires Microsoft to produce a how-to manual for outside companies that license Microsoft's server software and other programs, explaining how the servers communicate with Windows personal computers. Microsoft is also required to document how various parts of these systems can be used together.

According to a status report released Thursday, Microsoft's documentation efforts are almost done. The company has been barred from charging royalties for the technology until the documentation reaches a certain level of quality, and the report said Microsoft might reach that

point by the end of this year. The technical committee that reviews the documentation will continue to scrutinize the materials and work with Microsoft on changes through the term of the extension.

The government also wants to extend its oversight of the way that Windows gives PC makers and users a way to install non-Microsoft Web browsers and media players and set them as defaults.

The Redmond, Wash.-based software maker is readying its newest PC operating system, Windows 7, for launch in less than a year. Microsoft has added control panel options to turn off Internet Explorer, Windows Media Player and Microsoft's hard-drive search software, possibly in response to antitrust concerns.

Microsoft and the Justice Department also agreed Thursday that when the extension is up, the government can't ask for more time to review an operating system than hasn't gone on sale. That means if the version after Windows 7 hasn't been released by May 2011, it won't be subject to antitrust scrutiny under the 2002 agreement.

Twitter Fights Off Computer Worm

Micro-blogging service Twitter was targeted by a wave of attacks by a computer worm over Easter weekend, a co-founder of the Web messaging company said.

"On a weekend normally reserved for bunnies, a worm took center stage," Biz Stone said in a post on the official blog of the San Francisco-based startup.

Stone said the self-replicating computer worm, which resulted in users of the service receiving and sending unwanted messages, had not caused any damage.

"Please note that no passwords, phone numbers, or other sensitive information was compromised as part of these attacks," he said.

Stone said Twitter had come under attack on four occasions from the worm, which the online technology news agency CNET said was created by a 17-year-old New York hacker.

"All told, we identified and deleted almost 10,000 tweets (messages) that could have continued to spread the worm," Stone said.

He said the worm was similar to the Samy worm which recently attacked social network MySpace.

"We will conduct a full review of the weekend activities. Everything from how it happened, how we reacted, and preventative measures will be covered," Stone said.

Twitter, which allows users to pepper one another with messages of 140 characters or less, has seen a dizzying surge in popularity since it was launched in August 2006, but has been unable so far to generate revenue.

Hackers Grabbed More Than 285 Million Records in 2008

Hackers made off with at least 285 million electronic records in 2008, more than in the four previous years combined, according to a new study that shows identity thieves are getting better at exploiting careless mistakes that leave companies vulnerable to attack.

The number comes from a study of 90 data breaches investigated by Verizon Communications Inc., which is hired to do a post-mortem on most big computer intrusions.

No victims are identified in the report. Many of the breaches aren't even public. That can happen if law enforcement insists on secrecy because of an ongoing criminal investigation, or if personally identifiable information wasn't lost in the hack.

In many breaches, especially involving lost or stolen laptops, the records aren't used for anything at all.

Verizon's study looked only at breaches involving attacks that resulted in compromised records being used in a crime, like making counterfeit credit cards and buying homes and medical coverage under someone else's identity - and on their dime.

The company found that 90 percent of the breaches it investigated could have been avoided with basic security measures.

One of those is recognizing how valuable so-called "non-critical" computers are to hackers.

Peter Tippett, vice president of research and intelligence for Verizon's business security solutions division, says criminals aren't looking to crash through the front door with a brazen computer attack. Often they're content to feel around the edges and look for vulnerabilities that can get them in through the equivalent of a side window.

Even by tapping into computers of low-level employees who don't handle sensitive data, hackers can get a toehold for installing more malicious software that scans the network traffic and looks for vulnerabilities in other computers.

The study also found that data breaches are getting more severe because criminals are using sophisticated new programs that were custom-designed for particular attacks and weren't known to the security community or law enforcement.

Verizon says 93 percent of all compromised records in its study came from the financial sector.

Phishers Get More Wily as Cybercrime Grows

Phishing scams have grown up from the unsophisticated swindles of the past in which fake Nigerian princes e-mailed victims, who would get a big windfall if they just provide their bank account number.

Even as authorities try to stamp out that con and other e-mail and

online scams, scammers are getting more wily and finding new loopholes to exploit.

The vast majority of e-mail is spam and an unknown percentage of that is meant to defraud. The scale of electronic fraud means that that the criminals can make huge profits even if only a small percentage of people are duped.

Phishing commonly refers to hoax e-mails purportedly from banks or other trustworthy sources that seek to trick recipients into revealing bank or credit card account numbers and passwords.

The U.S. government scored a big victory in November when the web hosting company McColo Corp. was taken offline. Estimates vary, but the Washington Post said that 75 percent of spam worldwide had been sent through that single company.

But the spam e-mails offering celebrity diets, cheap printer ink, erased credit card debt and amazing orgasms quickly found a new way to inboxes, according to Google's security subsidiary Postini.

Now spammers use a variety of computers to send out spam e-mails to obscure their origins, meaning that a dramatic McColo-style takedown will be harder to reproduce, said Adam Swidler, product marketing manager for Google's Postini.

And they've largely abandoned scams that are easy to see through - like the Nigerian prince - in favor of more sophisticated "location-based spam," which directs the victim to a Web site discussing a local disaster or similar issue. If they click on the offered video, the Web site downloads a virus to the user's computer, Google said in a blog on security.

Tim Cranton, a Microsoft cybersecurity expert, said there was no way to know how much money is stolen. "We don't have a way to estimate numbers because there are so many victims that you're not aware of," he said.

New technology means new ways to steal. One of the latest is "smishing," which is nothing more than a phishing fraud sent via SMS text messaging.

E-con artists are getting more sophisticated in approaching potential victims. One tactic has been to write spam that purports to come from a trusted source, like Paypal.

When Paypal, which is owned by eBay, learned that spammers were using its name, they put a digital signature on their e-mails and asked providers like Yahoo and Google to block any e-mail purporting to come from them which did not have that signature.

"We know how many they throw away and it's approximately speaking about 10 million a month," said Michael Barrett, Paypal's chief information security officer. "If the consumer never sees the e-mail in the first place then it's hard for them to get victimized."

"Phishing was not just impacting consumers, in terms of general loss, it was impacting their view of the safety of the Internet and that it was indirectly damaging our brand," added Barrett.

Security experts say they are seeing more and more shifts from outright fraud, where the victim will hand over their money, to the use of

malware, basically malicious software which, among other things, collects passwords and credit card numbers for thieves.

"Those will then be sold on the underground market," said David Marcus, a threat research expert at McAfee computer security firm.

The person purchasing the passwords and card numbers will use that information to make purchases, get cash or create fake identities.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation, working with police in the United Kingdom, Turkey and Germany, shut down one such online forum called Dark Market in October 2008 which, at its peak, had more than 2,500 registered members, according an FBI press release issued at the time.

But experts agreed that they didn't expect the problem to go away anytime soon, and that more people out of work could well mean more people like to fall for scams.

Marcus said many of the scams were nothing more than the digital equivalent of confidence tricks, although on a massive scale that can net some scammers more than $100,000 a month.

"These things only have to be 2 percent successful," he said. "Those campaigns are sent out to tens of millions of people at the same time.

Pirate Bay's Fileshare Four Get Year in Jail

Four men behind The Pirate Bay, one of the world's biggest free file-sharing websites, were each sentenced to a year in jail on Friday for breaching copyright, and ordered to pay $3.6 million in compensation.

Analysts said the guilty verdict in the closely-watched test case could help music and film companies recoup millions of dollars in lost revenues, though they doubted it would stem the tide of illegal downloading.

In a broadcast on The Pirate Bay's website one of the four defendants, Peter Sunde, taunted the court, holding up a mock IOU note for 31 million Swedish crowns ($3.6 million) followed by the initials "JK" – Internet lingo for "just kidding."

"That's the closest they're going to get to getting money from me," Sunde said.

International trade body IFPI, which represents some 1,400 record companies across the world, reported earlier this year that about 95 percent of music downloaded in 2008 was illegal.

On its website, The Pirate Bay scorned the ruling, calling it a "crazy verdict."

"It was lol (laugh out loud) to read and hear," the message read. "But as in all good movies, the heroes lose in the beginning but have an epic victory in the end anyhow. That's the only thing Hollywood has ever taught us."

IFPI Chairman John Kennedy welcomed the court sentence which he said in

a statement provided a "a strong deterrent" against copyright infringement.

"This is good news for everyone, in Sweden and internationally, who is making a living or a business from creative activity and who needs to know their rights will protected by law," he said.

The men linked to The Pirate Bay - Sunde, Gottfrid Svartholm Warg, Fredrik Neij and Carl Lundstrom - were charged early last year by a Swedish prosecutor with conspiracy to break copyright law and related offences. They denied the charges.

Companies including Warner Bros., MGM, Columbia Pictures, 20th Century Fox Films, Sony BMG, Universal and EMI also sought damages of more than 100 million crowns ($12 million) to cover lost revenues.

The Stockholm district court said in a statement the four were found guilty of breaching copyright laws and each sentenced to a year in prison.

Lundstrom's attorney, Per Samuelson, told journalists he was shocked by the verdict and the severity of the sentence.

"That's outrageous, in my point of view. Of course we will appeal," he said. "This is the first word, not the last. The last word will be ours."

The lawyers defending Sunde and Neij told Reuters their clients would also appeal the verdict.

The group that controls The Pirate Bay, launched in 2003, says that no copyrighted material is stored on its servers and no exchange of files actually takes place there so it cannot be held responsible for what material is being exchanged.

The prosecution said that by financing, programing and administering the site, the four men promoted the infringement of property rights by the site's users.

Industry experts were not convinced the verdict would have a lasting effect.

"Every time you get rid of one, another bigger one pops up. Napster went, and then up came a whole host of others ... The problem of file-sharing just keeps growing year on year, and it's increasingly difficult for the industry to do anything about it," said music analyst Mark Mulligan of research firm Forrester.

Dan Cryan, senior analyst at media research firm Screen Digest, said the lack of international copyright law meant websites dedicated to illegal downloads could simply move on to a new country if legislation tightened where they operated.

"Pirate Bay was brilliant at self-publicity, but the reality is there are lots of other torrent-tracker sites," he said.

"The closing of the one that shouts the loudest won't make any difference."

EBay's Tweaks for Sellers Part of Changes to Site

More changes are coming to eBay. The online marketplace operator
announced Tuesday that sellers will have new ways of listing items on
the site.

San Jose, Calif.-based eBay Inc., which had 86.3 million active users at
the end of 2008, said the tweaks are to become effective in mid-June.

Among the changes: Sellers will be able to charge various prices for
similar products that are sold under one listing, such as
different-sized shirts. And now June 15 is the deadline for sellers to
add a return policy and handling time to their listings. That rule was
originally supposed to take effect last month.

EBay also is adding a feature called "Smart FAQ," which will
automatically take information from site listings to give buyers answers
to a number of top questions, such as whether a seller will ship items
internationally. A seller wouldn't have to respond personally.

The company added that that starting in the second quarter it will start
handling disputes between buyers and sellers through eBay itself, rather
than on the dispute-resolution section of its online payments service,
PayPal, as it had in the past.

EBay said the change is meant in part to cut down the time spent
settling problems between buyers and sellers. It expects to handle all
disputes on eBay before the start of the 2009 holiday season.

EBay spokesman Usher Lieberman said the company decided to announce all
the changes at once, about two months before they will be implemented,
in response to sellers' requests for more predictability about site
adjustments.

The changes are the latest in a long line of alterations the company has
made as it has struggled to improve its online marketplace. They are
being announced a month after eBay acknowledged it still has a long way
to go.

At the time, Chief Executive John Donahoe echoed what many on Wall
Street have long believed that eBay's marketplace business has not
kept pace with the changing competitive landscape and customers' needs.
Donahoe pledged to pick up eBay's pace of innovation.

Will the Nettop Kill the Traditional Desktop?

Sales of desktop PCs have been declining for some time now. In fact,
notebooks now outsell their deskbound brethren worldwide. This trend isn't
surprising, given the convenience, portability and growing affordability
of portable PCs. Add to that the rapid ascension of the netbook, with its
even smaller dimensions and prices, and shoppers are finding fewer reasons
to purchase a bulky desktop unless they crave the ultimate in speed and
storage.

But the recent reinvention of the all-in-one desktop, or nettop, may
 "reinvigorate and redefine" the traditional PC, according to market

researcher DisplaySearch. While the all-in-one desktop with a flat-panel LCD screen (AIO LCD PC) has been around for years, computer buyers haven't exactly embraced the concept. In fact, all-in-ones have account for just 2% of the total desktop display market in any given year, according to DisplaySearch.

So why the sudden AIO bullishness? Because the new nettop PC melds the advantages of the hot netbook category-low price, slim design, and a relatively small footprint-with the ergonomically friendly (i.e., desktop) benefits of a larger LCD display and a full-size keyboard. Some nettops may include touch screens too.

As a result, the nettop is convenient for the cramped office cubicle, tiny home office, or student desk. Says DisplaySearch: "Based on the Intel´fi Atom processor microarchitecture, which helped to launch the mini-note category, nettops are expected to be a far cry from the existing AIO LCD PCs, which are typically feature-rich and high priced."

Affordability is key here. A nettop with a 18-5-inch LCD costs as little as $240 to $250 to build, and could sell for as little as $300 in some global markets, although a street price of $400 to $500 is probably more realistic, DisplaySearch estimates. Those low prices could boost all-in-one PC shipments (including nettops) to more than 6 million units worldwide this year, up from 3.5 million in 2008.

The nettop and netbook probably won't attract the same shopper. The netbook buyer is intrigued by the concept of anytime-anywhere computing, and is willing to sacrifice screen and keyboard size for convenience. The nettop buyer wants an inexpensive desktop experience without the bulk of a traditional tower PC. Performance may prove disappointing, however, particularly if nettop fans decide to try more than basic web browsing and word processing.

Even if conventional desktops survive, the trend toward cheaper, smaller computers is bound to continue.

The 10 Greatest Flops in Computer History

They were way ahead of their time and could have advanced the power of mass home computing by years. But these revolutionary concepts became the biggest failures in digital history.

The Xerox Alto - it never made it beyond universities and research groups
The Apple III - the first in a line of Apple flops
The Osborne Executive - not what you'd expect from a laptop
The IBM PCjr was cancelled in 1985
Clive Sinclair's computing empire was at its peak when he launched the QL. The machine brought his company down
Apple invents the personal computing turkey. Again.
The NeXT was a commercial disaster but took Steve Jobs back to Apple
Photo: Marcin Wichary
Windows ME - fourth in the list of worst tech products of all time
The Netwon Message Pad - yet another flop brought to you by Apple
The Atari Jaguar - the machine that saw off ... er ...

Xerox Alto

The Alto was launched in 1973 following an extensive project at Xerox's original Palo Alto Research Center (PARC). Almost 40 years later it is still recognised as one of the most innovative computers ever designed and, for its time, its specification was breathtaking. The Alto used a mouse, menus, a graphical user interface (GUI), bit-mapped graphics, an Ethernet connection and 2.5mb removable drive "platters". Software included a Bravo, a WYSIWYG word processor; Draw, a graphical paint program that preceded Microsoft and Adobe's products by two decades; and Maze War, a three dimensional, networked, multiplayer, first-person shooter game – 20 years before ID Software brought the genre back with Wolfenstein, Doom and Quake.

Designed to take advantage of the high-speed laser printers that Xerox was developing, the Alto was never released commercially. Xerox saw a future of desktop home computers with their electronic documents and electronic retrieval as a threat to its core business – printed documents. So the Alto was, instead, kept inside Palo Alto or given away to some universities and other research institutions. In all, 2,000 Altos were built and very few survive today. But the legacy of the Alto most certainly does survive: Steve Jobs from Apple Computer toured Xerox's PARC in 1979 and saw the potential of the Alto's GUI. The design of the Lisa – Apple's great hope – was already well advanced but was changed to be based on a GUI and the world of computing was changed. Sadly, as we shall see, the Lisa was also destined to become one of computing's greatest flops.

As a footnote, Xerox released a commercial version of the Alto – the Star – in 1979. It went on sale in the US for more than $16,000. Unsurprisingly, it quickly sank.

*Apple III *

The Apple 3 was released in 1980 and was a catastrophe for the company built by Steve Wozniak and Steve Jobs. It was one of the worst computers ever built. Aimed at the business user, Apple priced it at close to $8,000 (if you wanted a keyboard, a monitor and a printer which, strangely, some people seemed to think were useful) which was way too high even for top-end business users.

But the main problem with the computer was its design. Hideous by Apple's standards, internally the machine was a disaster. In an attempt to shield the components from external interference, Apple stuck an aluminium box inside the plastic case. At the same time, Steve Jobs decided that the computer should not have a fan meaning that it often got so hot that chips would pop out of their boards. Apple's disastrous PR machine informed customers that they should lift the box 10cm above their desks and "drop it to reseat the chips".

The Apple III was supposed to be compatible with the successful Apple II but this was a half truth. Randy Wigginton, a member of its design team, blamed the machine's failure on "feature creep" and that it was designed by committee. "Everybody had ideas about what the III should do . . . and all of them were included," he said.

Apple tried to fix the case problems and increased its RAM to 256KB. But the damage had been done and it was dropped in September 1985.

*Osborne Executive *

Osborne launched the highly successful Osborne 1 - a supposed portable - in 1981. The machine was a hit, having drawn much inspiration from Xerox's PARC projects of the mid and late 1970s. However, there were many flaws with the machine including its tiny screen, tiny memory and lack of decent software.

The Executive was designed to correct these flaws and launched in 1982 with a bigger screen and more memory. It also came with a higher price - marketing at close to $2,500. Like its predecessor the Executive opened to reveal a
detachable keyboard, the built-in monitor and two floppy drives.

Nobody who uses a modern laptop or netbook today would be under any illusion about either the Osborne 1 or the Executive's ease of portability. But, for their time, the machines - both the size of a sewing machine and weighing the equivalent of a fully-packed suitcase - were pretty radical.

The Executive was a flop not because there was anything inherently wrong with the machine but rather because of its retail failure. An announcement by Osborne soon after the Executive launched that it was working on an IBM PC-compatible product called Vixen had a catastrophic effect on the Executive's sales meaning that the company did not have the money to continue developing Vixen.

Osborne went into bankruptcy in September 1983.

*IBM PCjr *

IBM had enjoyed huge success with the original PC - launched in 1981 - the first mass market desktop personal computer. But the arrival of cheaper clones and a cheaper rival operating system - Microsoft's MSDOS - seriously eroded IBM's market position.

So IBM decided that it had to capture a slice of the burgeoning home computer market and decided to build the* *IBM PCjr. Launched in March 1984, everybody expected the jr to be a huge success until they got their hands on one. Although it was based on the same architecture as the PC, the jr was largely incompatible with much of the PC's software and came with a whopping $1,300 price tag for the model with a floppy drive (there was no monitor included in the price).

Other failings included a disastrous wireless keyboard which communicated with the main box through infra red, no direct memory access which meant that the keyboard was disabled when accessing the the floppy drive and that users couldn't save data directly to the floppy and a series of wholly non-standard expansion and interface ports.

So few jrs were sold that the machine was cancelled in March 1985.

Sinclair QL

Sir Clive Sinclair's company dominated the British home computer market in the early 1980s with the Sinclair ZX81 and the phenomenally successful Sinclair Spectrum - a mass market machine with colour graphics and a huge number of third party games that made it, in effect, one of Britain's most successful games consoles.

But Sir Clive was anxious to break into the small business market and developed the QL - Quantum Leap - unveiling it to the press in January.

The machine was a breakthrough in computing power. It had two proprietry "Microdrives" instead of disk drives - tiny tape cartridge readers each capable of 128k of storage. The QL was based on Motorola's 68008 processor and was the first home computer with a 32 bit CPU - beating the Apple Macintosh to the title with just a few days to spare. Indeed the impending launch of the first Mac was the one reason that Sir Clive rushed through the launch of the QL and this proved to be the machine and, ultimately, the company's downfall. There were many orders but few early deliveries - Sinclair simply did not have the manufacturing capacity to satisfy the demand and started to lose money.

Coupled with the failure of the C5 electric three-wheeled car, the QL laid low a company that had promised to make Britain a world leader in personal computing and Sinclair was sold to Amstrad in 1986.

Apple Lisa

After the disaster of the Apple III few thought that Apple could produce another lemon. They were wrong.

Steve Jobs's original 1979 Spec for the Lisa called for a business machine costing $2,000 with a green screen, a 16-bit processor and a high capacity floppy drive. However, the project was beset by delays and interruptions and changes in management. Originally a low-end machine, the project became heavily influenced by the research done at Xerox's PARC and particularly the Alto computer's GUI. As the project progressed, Jobs was forced off it and went on to create a separate team developing the Mac in tandem.

When it finally launched in 1983, the Lisa bore little resemblance to its original spec: it had two specially designed disk drives, a Motorola 68000 CPU, 1MB of RAM and a 5MB external hard drive. It also featured multitasking capabilities - a groundbreaking move but one which led to the Lisa becoming unacceptably slow. And the killer was the price - all that change in management and an estimated $50 million in research and development costs meant that Apple had to put the Lisa on sale for $10,000. The business community ran a mile from the machine and adopted IBM's PC. The final blow was the launch of the Macintosh in 1984 - a much cheaper machine which also featured a GUI, a mouse and an Apple badge. Two further models of the Lisa followed with final one being the so-called Macintosh-XL which could run Mac software. But the model never recovered and it was discontinued in 1986.

NeXT

Steve Jobs left Apple in 1985 after the successful launch of the Macintosh. He had been sidelined into the role of chairman and, by all accounts, had become bored. Jobs informed the board of Apple that he was going to launch another company and that a number of senior Apple staff were going with him.

In 1987 he launched NeXT Computer Inc, a company based around a single idea: Jobs wanted to build a sophisticated yet cheap supercomputer that would be used by the scientific and academic communities. He designed the NeXT based upon Motorola's processors and running academia's operating system of choice: Unix. Jobs believed that the NeXT was perfect for scientists because it was more powerful than a Mac but far less expensive than the mainframes and minis most of them worked on.

The NeXT was a groundbreaking machine with its striking black cube

design and graphical front end. It also had a 33Mhz processor which made it more powerful than any other desktop computer on the market at the time. But it was still $6,000 and there was almost no truly useful software.

Jobs, who had used his own money to launch the NeXT, quickly began to ran out of cash and took part in a documentary about young entrepreneurs. It was watched by Ross Perot - a multimillionaire and future presidential candidate - who offered to help Jobs and ended up pumping in tens of millions of dollars in return for a 16 per stake. Jobs believed that the company now couldn't fail and built a huge manufacturing plant capable of building 150,000 units a year.

The company began to eat cash again and Jobs turned off potential partners, including his friend Bill Gates, the head of Microsoft. Everything was late as well with the final debugged versions not shipping until the end of 1988, over a year after it had originally been promised.

Sales were well below Jobs's forecasts and, by the time the company pulled out of computer hardware in 1993, just 50,000 units had been sold.

But the NeXT lived on in the cloud and back at Jobs's old company, Apple. Tim Berners-Lee developed hypertext - the language that drives the web - on a NeXT. Berners-Lee later wrote: "The NeXT interface was beautiful, smooth and consistent. It had great flexibility and other features that would not be seen on PCs until later, such as voice email and a built-in synthesiser."

The final irony in NeXT's short life was its ultimate demise: Apple, desperate for a new operating system to replace its creaking MacOS had long admired the Unix that drove the NeXT. Just before Christmas 1996, Apple bought both NeXT and Jobs himself for $400 million.

Four years later, Apple, with Jobs at the helm, launched OS/X - the operating system that drives today's phenomenally successful Macs, an operating system that began its life on the NeXT.

Windows ME

It was supposed to be the first operating system that would support Universal Plug and Play. But Microsoft's Windows Millennium Editiion (ME) was found to be less compatible than Windows 98 - its predecessor. Shortcomings in the OS meant that it needed to be constantly reinstalled - a process that was horrendously difficult - and led to derision for Bill Gates's company which was only matched when it launched Vista a few years later. There were huge instabilities within ME which meant that a series of drivers did not work and made it virtually unsuable for all but the most experienced Windows user. A PC World article dubbed Windows Me the "Mistake Edition" and ranked it fourth in the "Worst Tech Products of All Time" feature.

Apple Newton

Launched in 1990, the Newton was Apple's attempt to head off Penpoint - a handheld operating system developed by GO Corporation. When the Newton was launched, Apple's marketing boasted that it could "read your handwriting" which turned out to be an overblown claim. Writing in 2001, years after the product was killed, Larry Tesler, one of the Newton development team said: "The marketing group's desire to attract attention through dramatic

claims ignored the fundamental tenet that a product must never seriously under-deliver on its promises. As soon as I saw the final Newton brochure, I knew we were doomed."

The second generation Newton was launched and it was a dramatic improvement but it had already been beaten to the market by the Palm Pilot which was more focussed upon what consumers really wanted in a handheld and was available at an affordable price. The Palm was a roaring success and Microsoft reentered the market with Windows CE.

The Newton continued to improve after its poor launch but it was too late and the product was finally killed in 1993. It marked the end of Apple's involvement in the handheld market until its dramatic and hugely successful reentry with the iPhone. Today the Newton retains a cult following with many thousands of users still dedicated to it.

*Atari Jaguar *

It was meant to rival the hugely successful consoles launched by Sega and Nintendo and mark Atari's return to domination of the gaming market. But the Atari Jaguar - released in 1993 - was a complete flop. The Jaguar was notoriously hard to write software for which meant that few games were ever released for it and gamers complained that the system's 15-button controller was ridiculously hard to use.

Atari claimed that the Jaguar was the only 64 bit console - a claim that was highly questionable given its base 32-bit architecture. Its final demise was sealed when Sony launched the long-anticipated Playstation in 1994. The Jaguar was withdrawn in 1995 and spelled the end for Atari in the home video game console market.

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